

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 EB-11 IO-13 RSR-01 OMB-01 /129 W

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R 180700Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7620

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION UN

USDOCOSOUTH

EUCOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L NICOSIA 1586

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CY

SUBJECT: CHURCH CRISIS

REF: NICOSIA 1566 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ARCHBISHOP HAS DECLARED SEES OF KYRENIA AND KITIUM VACANT, AND APPEARS DETERMINED TO MOVE RAPIDLY TO REPLACE THREE DEFROCKED BISHOPS. HEALTH MINISTER SEVERIS RESIGNED OVER CHURCH CRISIS, HAVING FAILED IN EARLIER EFFORTS AT MEDIATION. WE DETECT GENERAL UNEASINESS AT PROSPECT THAT CHURCH POLITICAL CRISIS IS BEING DRIVEN THROUGH TO CONCLUSION, BUT NO REASON TO EXPECT SUCCESSFUL MEDIATION AT THIS STAGE. GRIVAS EARLIER PLEDGED TO PROTECT BISHOPS, AND WILL SHORTLY BE UNDER VERY INTENSE PRESSURE TO DO SOMETHING. GREEK AMB IN ATHENS ON CONSULTATION. END SUMMARY.

1. ARCHBISHOP HAS ALREADY ISSUED CIRCULAR ANNOUNCING SEES

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OF KYRENIA AND KITIUM VACANT. ACCORDING LOCAL PRESS, IN NEXT FEW

DAY MAKARIOS EXPECTED ORDER GOVT OFFICES AND BANKS TO IGNORE ANY REQUESTS OR INSTRUCTIONS FROM BISHOPS, THUS CUTTING OFF THEIR SOURCE OF FUNDS. BISHOPS COULD APPEAL TO COURTS, BUT UNLIKELY THEY WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL. (IN JULY 17 MEETING WITH AMB, PIO CHRISTODOULOU CONFIRMED THAT MAKARIOS ON SAME DATE WOULD SEND LETTERS TO BANKS AND LAND OFFICE INFORMING THEM THAT ALL TRANSACTIONS OF DEPOSED BISHOPS HENCEFORTH INVALID.)

2. MAKARIOS THEN EXPECTED COMPLETE ELECTORAL PROCESS FOR NEW BISHOP OF PAPHOS, WHO WOULD BE ENTHRONED WITH ASSISTANCE OF AT LEAST THREE FOREIGN BISHOPS. FOLLOWING THIS, PRESS SPECULATES THAT MAKARIOS WILL CALL ELECTIONS FOR NEW BISHOPS OF KITIUM AND KYRENIA. AS IN PAPHOS, ELECTIONS WOULD BE CUMBERSOME, THREE-STAGE AFFAIRS (SEE NICOSIA 1029 FOR DETAILS). PROTRACTED PROCESS WOULD GIVE GRIVAS AND HIS SUPPORTERS MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO DISRUPT PROCEEDINGS. GRIVAS HAS PROMISED PROTECT BISHOPS (NICOSIA 480) AND, ACCORDING RIGHT WING SYNAGERMOS, IS STILL DETERMINED PRESERVE THEIR POSITIONS. IF GRIVAS DECIDES MOVE IN LIMASSOL OR KYRENIA, HE WILL HAVE SUPPORT LARGER PERCENTAGE LOCAL POPULATION THAN IN PAPHOS, MAKARIOS' HOME TOWN. (ACCORDING CHRISTODOULOU, MAKARIOS WILL AVOID IMMEDIATE ELECTION BY CONVENING ANOTHER SYNOD TO ELECT SUFFRAGAN BISHOPS FOR KITIUM AND KYRENIA AS INERIM STEP, PENDING SELECTION NEW BISHOPS AT SOME FUTURE DATE. PER CHRISTODOULOU, NEW PAPHOS BISHOP WILL BE ELECTED ON JULY 29, INSTALLED JULY 30).

3. STILL OPEN IS QUESTION OF HOW MAKARIOS WILL REMOVE REBEL BISHOPS FROM ECCLESIASTICAL PREMISES. KYRENIA AND KITIUM BISHOPRICS ARE VIRTUAL ARMED CAMPS AND FORCEFUL MOVE TO EXPEL BISHOPS COULD RESULT IN BLOODY FIGHTING. AT VERY LEAST, IT WOULD BE UNSEEMLY AFFAIR AND WE UNDERSTAND POLICE ARE LOATH TO BECOME INVOLVED. (CHRISTODOULOU NOTED THAT MAKARIOS COULD STRIP BISHOPS OF ALL AUTHORITY IN THEIR SEES WITHOUT PHYSICALLY REMOVING THEM FROM THEIR RESIDENCES. HE STRESSED MAKARIOS DESIRE KEEP CURRENT DISPUTE CHURCH AFFAIR NOT INVOLVING GOVT ORGANS.)

4. WE DETECT GENERAL UNEASINESS AT PROSPECT THAT ARCHBISHOP WILL FORCE CHURCH POLITICAL CRISIS TO TOTAL PURGE OF BISHOPS, AND FEARS THAT THIS WILL DEEPLY DAMAGE AND DIVIDE CHURCH. HEALTH MINISTER SEVERIS RESIGNATION JULY 16, FOLLOWING FAILURE HIS EARLIER EFFORTS
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AT CONCILIATION, WILL BE READ BY MANY AS CONFESSION NO COMPROMISE POSSIBLE. (JUSTICE MINISTER VAKIS WILL TAKE PORTFOLIO).

5. DESPITE THIS, THERE ARE WIDESPREAD RUMORS THAT ANOTHER MEDIATION EFFORT IS BEING ATTEMPTED AND APPEALS ARE BEING ADDRESSED TO ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH AND TO GREECE. RUMORS APPARENTLY GENERATED BY GREEK AMB LAGACOS RECENT MEETINGS WITH ESEA PRES VASSILIADES, BISHOP ANTHIMOS, AND ARCHBISHOP MAKARIOS.

(LATTER MEETING TOOK PLACE AT DAWN JULY 17, IMMEDIATELY BEFORE LAGACOS FLEW TO ATHENS.) WE DOUBT ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH OR GREEK CHURCH, EACH FOR OWN REASONS, WILL ALLOW SELVES TO BECOME INVOLVED, AND WE ASSUME MAKARIOS WILL THWART ANY EFFORT AT MEDIATION.

6. IN CONVERSATION WITH AMB, CHRISTODOULOU EXPRESSED APPREHENSION OVER GRIVAS AND ATHENS ROLES IN CURRENT ECCLESIASTICAL DISPUTE. RE GRIVAS, CHRISTODOULOU REITERATED CURRENT GOC LINE THAT GENERAL SERIOUSLY ILL AND NOT FULLY IN CONTROL OF ENOSIST MOVEMENT. HE CITED ARTICLES IN TODAYS PRO GRIVAS GNOMI (CALLING FOR HOLY WAR OF FAITHFUL AGAINST "BETRAYAL" OF ORTHODOXY REPRESENTED BY ACTIONS OF SYNOD) AS REGRETTABLE EFFORT TO STIR UP VIOLENCE AGAINST SYNOD DECISION AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

7. COMMENT: FROM CHRISTODOULOU PRESENTATION, AND CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER GREEK CYPRIOT OFFICIALS, WOULD APPEAR THAT MAKARIOS IS TAKING LIMITED BUT FIRM STEPS TO IMPLEMENT SYNODS DECISION TO DEFROCK HIS THREE RIVALS WHILE AVOIDING THREAT OR USE OF FORCE. WHETHER THIS WILL PREVENT VIOLENT CONFRONTATION REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 JUL 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973NICOSI01586
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS MCCLOSKEY
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: NICOSIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730726/aaaaassd.tel
Line Count: 136
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 NICOSIA 1566 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10-Oct-2001 by elyme>; APPROVED <14-Nov-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHURCH CRISIS
TAGS: PINT, CY
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005